

ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN CULTURAL MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Cultural Management is one of the three courses of universitarian interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate Cultural Studies, the first of a kind at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek. The course is based on a common original module of Cultural Studies, providing for a foundation of general theoretical knowledge intrinsic to the interdisciplinary studies, whereby Cultural Studies are a multidisciplinary area with a versatile research objective and methodological framework, encompassing a wide spectrum of analytical fields dealing with culture. Such a common program is performed within undergraduate and graduate studies, while the Cultural Management course facilitates an acquisition of specialized knowledge, necessary skills, and narrower competencies for an efficacious cultural management.

Differentiating education (i.e., an institutionalized form of learning, usually related to a juvenile age) and learning, the English Language instruction within the Cultural Management course endeavors to suppress an inconvenience of “return to the school benches” while promoting a habit of students’ lifelong learning (i.e., of a spontaneous, informal knowledge acquisition irrespective of their age), in conformity with the Croatian *Adult Education Strategy*. In addition to interdisciplinarity, such an open study model aims to promote an acquisition of theoretical knowledge in various English analytical discourses (e.g., information science theory, theory of nation, educational theory, cultural anthropology, cultural studies, deconstruction, New Historicism, gender studies, environmental studies, postcolonial studies, subcultural theories, etc.) as well, perplexing it with a professional practice directly.

Keywords: Cultural management, cultural studies, interdisciplinarity, English Language, lifelong learning

Introduction

In the territory of the Republic of Croatia, educational system was subject to many reforms that, as a rule, have not contributed to the proliferation of high-quality human resources, ready to be directly involved in entrepreneurship and cultural management; moreover, this problem was even increased due to a fact that the higher educational system has experienced a transformation during several recent years, having been developed into the Bologna Process, while the high school system has not adequately followed that change. This discrepancy was reflected in the English Language instruction as well. Because of a significance to interdisciplinarily educate professional personnel and future cultural managers, it was necessary to devise the curricula and syllabi commensurate with the present needs and cultural entities’ comprehension of entrepreneurship as one of the main lifelong learning competencies, i.e., of the English language as a vehicle therein.

Therefore, the English Language curricula were restructuralized in a way that they currently try to solve the problems of students' adjustment to the pragmatic business conditions in cultural entities and to the acceptance of entrepreneurship as an educational, societal, and economic value. Additionally, it was also necessary to reanalyze and redefine a policy, mission, and learning outcomes within the lifelong learning and adult education segments. With regard to the stakeholders, maximal efforts were also invested in an increase in the faculty and student mobility, pursuant to the European Union guidelines and the propositions of the *International Association for Continued Education and Training (IACET)* from Washington, DC.

While so doing, the Department of Cultural Studies aspires to apply contemporary and innovative learning models in the English Language instruction adapted to the students of all courses, and especially to the one in Cultural Management, also providing for a professional qualification by a practical instructional part in the form of mandatory workshops. The instruction proceeds in collaboration with various cultural institutions, professionals, and native English speakers, being relocated from the departmental premises as to enable the students to acquire necessary competences and skills needed for an active participation in labor market. Methodologically, the instruction is based on a modification of a post-learning research paradigm into a learning-through-research paradigm, developing the students' awareness about a significance of social participation in the local environment of the City of Osijek, Croatia's East, and Croatia as a whole.

It is therefore a departmental intention to be gradually established as a center of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research while launching the interdisciplinary (national and international) scientific-research projects, whereby a proficiency in English may prove one of the crucial factors. In addition to a scientific-research activity, the Department aims to also promote artistic performances, introduce various qualification and in-service training programs within a lifelong learning concept, and stimulate the faculty's professional postdoctoral qualifications, mobility, and intercultural communication in different fields of science and arts.

English on a Way to a “Knowledge Society”

Understanding a Croatian adaptation of the “knowledge society” concept as a community (i.e., a human society or a state) whose activities and progress are predominantly founded on a production, distribution, and utilization of knowledge, whereby “knowledge” is comprehended as one of the most significant values and motors of an economic and general societal development, the Department of Cultural Studies advocates an investment in science and advancement of professionals while applying a broader “lifelong learning” approach. Unlike a narrower “lifelong education” model, which merely encompasses an organized learning and observes education as a lifelong process, initiated by an obligatory schooling and formal education and lasting throughout a person's entire life, lifelong learning pertains to an overall, lifelong learning activity, aimed at an improvement of knowledge, skills, and competences within a personal civic and general societal (employment-related) perspective.

When it comes to the English Language instruction, this notion also implies learning in other chronological segments, from an older junior up to a (younger) senior age, which has proved to be very useful when applied to both the full- and part-time (study-as-you-work) departmental students. Although the Department mostly relies to formal education thereby, i.e., to the one structuralized and regularly performed in an accredited educational institution pursuant to a reviewed and authorized curricula and syllabi in order to eventually earn a baccalaureate diploma, informal learning, i.e., the unintentional one, resulting from quotidian business- or leisure-oriented activities involving the English language and being usually unstructuralized with regard to the objectives, time, or support, is also generally

avored, as it facilitates an individual's functional literacy, especially when it comes to the basic skills of reading and writing, for the sake of his or her own personal and communal development. Moreover, in cooperation with *Pearson Central Europe*, i.e., with its Zagreb-based office, our nonqualification workshops also occasionally promote nonformal education to organize a learning process streamlined to educate the adults for various social and cultural managerial activities in English, for the sake of their personal development. With a comprehension of learning as a continuous process wherein the results and motivation of an individual are conditioned by knowledge, habits, and experiences acquired during a juvenile age, we thereby try to accomplish four interrelated objectives: personal satisfaction, individual development, active citizenship, societal involvement, and employability.

Thus, a predominant objective of the English Language instruction is to introduce the students to the (Anglo-)American cultural and managerial terminology while qualifying them for a basic professional receptional-productive and an argumented structural competency in a business-oriented (written and oral) communication, pursuant to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*. This would also guarantee the students' professional development through both formal and nonformal learning in a stimulative academic environment, with a high completion rate and students' satisfaction. In conformity with the guidelines and multimedia produced by *Pearson Longman*, White Plains, NY, the instruction applies the state-of-the-art audiovisual teaching aids, with a possibility to be familiarized with the adjusted instructional contents via distant learning and e-learning, i.e., during the students' extracurricular activities or extramural leisure, outside of a conventional lecture room. Such an orientation provides for a possibility of hands-on experiences and a considerably broader simulational or situational involvement of the qualified, culturally or managerially educated externs fluent in English, or of the native English speakers, promoting a better student – lecturer interaction. In that respect, the expected realizable advantages are an increase in students' personal communication skills and mobility, with a possibility to comparatively evaluate his or her success with regard to the other congenial curricula, an instructional efficacy and organizational traceability, and a lesser students' workload with regard to the curricula and syllabi, vouchsafing an increased students' individualization and independence.

Procuring its students with the relevant digitalized literature and additional, authentic linguistic materials, the departmental English Language instruction relies to the rich multimedia while applying the modern audiovisuals, computers, and the Internet, combining consultation and lessons with students' own presentations (designed by the programs of Microsoft's *Office* packet) in an individualized and group-oriented approach. In its assessment and recognition procedure, the instruction tries to thematically validate both the formal and nonformal prescience of our students, i.e., of the future cultural managers in this case, authenticating a wide spectrum of their knowledge, know-how, skills, and competences acquired in various cultural and business environments (e.g., education, work, and leisure) during their careers. Retrieving the English vocabulary, grammatical, and translational information on business diversification, corporate organization, Human Resources Management (HRM) in cultural institutions, media campaigns, business correspondence, etc., the instruction introduces the Cultural Management students with the fundamental Anglo-American business terminology, its genre forms, and its brief historical development in the United States and in the United Kingdom while comparing it to the equivalent Croatian nomenclature, with a special emphasis on a conventional communication (e.g., business letter, facsimile, telephone conversation, live conversation) and its contemporary electronic counterpart (emails and the like). In that way, it is possible to surmount the students' unequal level of prescience concerning basic economic vocabulary, and the grammatical contents, i.e., the regularities of a business-oriented English language in

view of morphology, syntax, and semantics, are being acquired hereby up to a scope enabling a correct individual businesslike conversation. This assures the stimuli to the so-called “language activation,” a refreshment of the students’ preacquired linguistic competence and its combination with the newly accumulated linguistic fundus, as well as an expansion of general knowledge concerning the uniformities of the Anglo-American business-oriented English language.

However, especially when it comes to the departmental part-timers, i.e., to the study-as-you-work English Language attendees enrolled in the Cultural Management course within the Cultural Studies, it is worth noting that the “adult education” term still entails various international definitions. Back in 2003, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) emphasized that there was no consensus on a uniform (nonprofessional or nonvocational) adult education definition in Europe, for it is very difficult to determine the adulthood exactly, bearing in mind that learning, surroundings, and students’ age programmatically differ internationally, nationally, or even regionally. On the other hand, pursuant to the prevailing Croatian and the European Union practice, and pursuant to a designation stipulated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Department of Cultural Studies understands it as a superset of formal and nonformal learning processes that assist the adult students to develop their skills, enrich their knowledge, and improve their professional qualifications, readjusting them as to satisfy their societal needs. In case of the English Language instruction, it implies, according to a European Commission clarification, all the forms of adult learning subsequent to an initial educational cycle or a short-term training, i.e., a systematic teaching that develops competences necessary for an adequate execution or performance of certain tasks. The particular, theoretically based linguistic results pertaining to the English Language instruction itself are therefore a practice of both social and cognitive students’ skills.

It is worth emphasizing that we understand the notion of “literacy” in the English Language instruction expandedly, i.e., not only as a primary competence in the domains of reading and writing but also as a reasonable perusal and skimming, communication skills, and information technology deployment, enabling the students to comprehend the societal occurrences and solve the problems in a high-quality way. These skills may also assist the students, i.e., our future cultural managers, to be more capable and participate in teamwork while accepting cultural diversity and being ready to learn permanently. In this respect, methodologically and scientifically, their English Language literacy would also imply a capacity to recognize, understand, interpret, create, document, and communicate while utilizing the variously contextualized printed and nonprinted materials. Conclusively, during the English Language instruction, we even use guidance and counselling of our undergraduate, graduate, and predoctoral students to a lesser degree, especially within the *Erasmus+* framework: it encompasses various in-class instances of an individualized or group-based professional information campaign, objectivized to assist an individual student in a selection of his or her future career, profession, and working post within the Cultural Management sphere.

English and Employability

Having investigated a regional labor market for the sake of Croatian cultural entities and an adaptation to the European Union standards, we have still observed some noticeable deficiencies in the students’ proficiency in English as an acclaimed *lingua franca* in global businesslike communication. As a continuous economic growth and development causes an introduction of modifications in the educational system as a whole, we have to develop new communicational modalities in order to be able to monitor these changes. Hereby, it is necessary to begin with the students, for they have already acquired general and vocation

knowledge about certain disciplines through their education, but it is crucial to continue to motivate their innovation, creativity, and communication on higher levels. If sufficiently responsible, the students will also individually arrive at certain realizations, which might inspire them to become post-qualified for the needs of their respective cultural entities as well. An uninterrupted communication in modern multimedia lecture rooms provides for a students' capacitation to openly interact with both the professors and cultural managers while recognizing and esteeming individual students' abilities and talents, especially the linguistic ones in this case. Eventually, this could facilitate an application of their future expertise globally.

Alternatively, the entrepreneurs and cultural managers should also be more flexible as to adapt themselves to the demands of a changing labor market. While so doing, they could render their assistance to a direct student education, alleviating their employment process. The most renowned cultural entities, which achieve globally respectable results by virtue of their successful business practice, advertise open headhunting calls and invite applications for innovations, thus being equipped by the successful, pioneering, and creative juveniles to be involved in their business operations. As intellectual services are mostly represented on the Cultural Management market as well as in many other segments of economic life, this fact pinpoints a necessity to be directed to lifelong learning especially in the domain of telecommunications and business-oriented English language.

Since unemployment seems to be one of the biggest problems of the 21st century, a vision of the English Language instruction in the Cultural Management course is a successful establishment of a positive lecturer – student – entrepreneur intercommunication. The students are provided with an initiative possibility and ideational development that might eventually improve a cultural managerial segment. They are also encouraged to create excellent preconditions for their involvement in entrepreneurship and labor market by virtue of their knowledge, innovations, imagination, and communication in a positive atmosphere while studying. Hereby, entrepreneurship is defined as a “complexity of knowledge and skills pertaining to an observation of chances and its reversion into a personal or professional businesslike endeavor” (Singer 2007). Through an educational section adjusted to the needs of economic entities in Cultural Management, the students thus acquire certain expertise that might assist them in their high-quality participation in cultural entrepreneurship in English.

Nonetheless, although most operational principles of foreign higher educational institutions are already generally applied in the Cultural Management course as well, their closer interconnection with the economy, labor market, and their broader community is still observable, as is their larger portion of professional work; what is more, the data and experiences demonstrate that their students spend a lesser part of their instruction listening to the in-class theoretical lectures, while a considerably larger part than the one currently accustomed in Croatia is contracted as a practicum in a cultural institution itself. Consequently, the Department of Cultural Studies will have to invest further efforts to harmonize the curricula and syllabi with the correspondent European paragons in a near future.

Necessary Student Competences in an Educational Process

Students' achievements, or their “learning outcomes,” manifest the clearly expressed aptitudes, i.e., the expected knowledge and necessary adroitness and capabilities. Upon completion of an educational process, a student is thus expected to apply the acquired facts, dexterities, and attitudes in a concrete business practice. When it comes to the English Language instruction as well, they represent the statements specifying a linguistic content necessary to be known, understood, or demonstrated subsequent to the completion of lectures in the Cultural Management course. Thereby, they simultaneously help the students

understand what is expected from them and facilitate a learning process, but they also assist the faculty to precisely define a philological content to be mediated and eventually assimilated. The values that the students have to adopt subsequent to the completion of the course, described as educational objectives, learning outcomes, and tasks, are thus related to the cultural management activities they will be able to perform after the program is being finalized, on a societally satisfactory level. Indirectly, they also emit a message to the future students and the existent cultural managers, i.e., to their employers-to-be, informing them on the linguistic skills and competences the alumni possess once they graduate from the aforementioned course.

Conclusion

At the Department of Cultural Studies, a correlation has already been established between an overall economic efficacy of the cultural managerial stakeholders, students, and their professors involved in the English Language instruction in the Cultural Management course. This also implies an increased harmonization and interconnection with the higher educational system as a whole. The educational objectives will therefore continue to more precisely describe what our lecturers do to facilitate the students to fulfill their knowledge- and aptitude-based communicational requirements subsequent to the completion of a semester or of an Academic Year, pursuant to the market conditions and demands.

On the other hand, the learning outcomes will continuously define the results expected from a student in the end of an educational segment. As one of the higher educational system's objectives in Croatia is also pertaining to a synchronization of Croatian communicational skills with those in (Business) English, it is deemed necessary to unremittingly invest the efforts in a proper knowledge acquired while participating in a lifelong learning process, thus contributing both to an individual as well as to a communal benefit.

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